

Final

Environmental Impact Report

for the

Tehachapi East Afterbay Project

SCH# 2004061133



Lead Agency:

California Department of Water Resources
Division of Engineering
901 P Street, Room 313-B
Sacramento, CA 95814

Prepared by:

Aspen Environmental Group
30423 Canwood Street, Suite 215
Agoura Hills, CA 91301

December 2004

State of California
ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER
Governor

The Resources Agency
MIKE CHRISMAN
Secretary of Resources

Department of Water Resources
LESTER A. SNOW
Director

Please contact the following individuals for additional information regarding this document.

Michael Inamine
Project Manager
Division of Engineering
Department of Water Resources
1416 9th Street
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 653-7235

Mary Miller
Senior Environmental Scientist
Division of Planning and Local Assistance
Southern District
Department of Water Resources
770 Fairmont Avenue
Glendale, CA 91203
(818) 543-4698

Jon Davidson
EIR Contractor
Aspen Environmental Group
30423 Canwood Street, Suite 215
Agoura Hills, CA 91301
(818) 597-3407 x343

**California Department of Water Resources
TEHACHAPI EAST AFTERBAY PROJECT
FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT**

Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
1. Introduction	
1.1 Project Overview	1-1
1.2 Availability of the Draft EIR	1-2
1.3 Draft EIR Public Meeting	1-2
2. Revisions to the Draft EIR	2-1
3. Responses to Comments on the Draft EIR	3-1
4. Mitigation Monitoring Program	4-1
5. Report Preparation Staff	5-1

1. Introduction

This document, combined with the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR), constitutes the Final EIR for the Tehachapi East Afterbay Project. The Draft EIR was circulated for public review and comment from September 27 to November 10, 2004. The Draft EIR presents a complete description of the proposed project, the environmental setting, project impacts, alternatives, and all other required sections of an EIR as stipulated in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA, Public Resources Code §§ 21000-21178) and the Guidelines for the Implementation of CEQA (California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, §§ 15000-15387). The Draft EIR provided a detailed evaluation of the proposed project's potential impacts to air quality and biological resources. All other potential impacts were previously determined not to be significant (see Section 5.5 of the Draft EIR). Included within this Final EIR document are:

- Minor revisions or corrections to information presented in the Draft EIR (Section 2);
- Written comments received on the Draft EIR during the public review period, and responses to those comments (Section 3); and
- A Mitigation Monitoring Program for the proposed project (Section 4).

The changes to the Draft EIR presented in Section 2 do not represent substantial revisions to the information presented in the Draft EIR that was circulated for public review. No new significant project impacts have been identified since the Draft EIR was distributed for review.

1.1 Project Overview

The California Department of Water Resources (CDWR) proposes to construct a reservoir east of the bifurcation of the East Branch and West Branch of the California Aqueduct in southern Kern County; nine miles east of Gorman, California. The Tehachapi East Afterbay project (proposed project) would provide additional storage to the existing Tehachapi Afterbay (Pool 42). This additional storage would allow downstream facilities on the East Branch, and to a lesser extent, the West Branch, to operate for short periods without relying on the pumping operations of the Valley String Pumping Plants (Dos Amigos, Buena Vista, Teerink, Chrisman, and A.D. Edmonston), thereby reducing pumping during peak electrical demand periods and providing increased operational flexibility. Pumping could then be shifted from expensive, peak periods of power demand to off-peak periods when power rates are lower, resulting in cost savings and the statewide benefit of more efficient and stable energy consumption. The ability to shift to off-peak pumping is, however, often limited by a lack of regulatory storage and the need to maintain flow rates in the East Branch of the California Aqueduct. The proposed project would not result in increased Delta diversions or increased deliveries to State Water Project contractors, nor would it appreciably affect the timing of these deliveries.

Construction activities for the Tehachapi East Afterbay (East Afterbay) would occur over a 24-month period as estimated from the most recent project design information, and is tentatively scheduled for January 2005 to January 2007. The proposed project would consist of a reservoir (afterbay) with a water surface area that would cover approximately 71 acres, based on the normal maximum water surface elevation (of 3,100 feet), and have a gross storage capacity of approximately 1,159 acre-feet (AF). Virtually the entire reservoir pool would be constructed in excavation.

As a result of the proposed project, flow to the West Branch would remain relatively unchanged. Flow to the East Branch, which currently is routed through the existing Tehachapi Afterbay to Cottonwood Chutes or Alamo Powerplant, would diverge from the existing Tehachapi Afterbay into the East Afterbay via a new inlet channel designed to convey flows up to approximately 3,150 cubic feet per second (cfs). Water would then discharge from the East Afterbay into the Alamo headworks and/or Cottonwood Chutes via a new outlet channel. A new bypass around Alamo Powerplant and Cottonwood Chutes, which connects to Cottonwood Canal, would provide a third conveyance to the East Branch.

1.2 Availability of the Draft EIR

On September 27, 2004, the Draft EIR was made available for public review. Copies of the Draft EIR were provided to the following local libraries: Lancaster Library, Valencia Library, and Kern County Library. A Notice of Availability of the Draft EIR was placed in the following newspapers (appeared on 9/27/04): *Bakersfield Californian*, *Antelope Valley Press*, and the *Signal Newspaper*. Notices were also mailed to affected agencies, organizations, and individuals on September 27, 2004, and posted on utility poles and fences in the project vicinity on October 2, 2004. In addition to the above noticing, the Draft EIR was also available on the CDWR website: http://www.dpla.water.ca.gov/sd/environment/tehachapi/tehachapi_east_afterbay.html. The 45-day public review period ended on November 10, 2004.

1.3 Draft EIR Public Meeting

The CDWR conducted a public meeting on the Draft EIR during the 45-day public review period. The purpose of the meeting was to provide members of the public an opportunity to ask questions about the proposed project and make comments on the Draft EIR. The meeting was held on November 8, 2004, at the Frazier Mountain High School in Lebec, California. Notices for the meeting were mailed to interested or affected agencies, organizations, and individuals. Approximately 72 meeting notices were mailed on October 28, 2004. Notices were also posted on utility poles and fences in the project vicinity on October 29, 2004. Thirteen members of the public attended the meeting. Written comments received on the Draft EIR during the public review period, and responses to those comments are provided in Section 3 of this Final EIR.